

Colleen Brown
Whiting
LD 34

Testimony in Support of LD 34
An Act to Increase the Minimum Salary for Teachers

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

I am submitting testimony in support of LD 34. While I approach this bill with some hesitation, I believe it addresses a very real problem that Maine can no longer ignore.

Maine has one of the highest per-pupil spending rates in the country, yet student outcomes continue to decline. That reality should concern every taxpayer and every policymaker in this state. Simply spending more money without structural accountability will not solve the problem.

However, one issue that is undeniably contributing to the decline in our education system is the growing crisis in teacher recruitment and retention.

Across Maine, schools are struggling to fill positions. Many districts are relying on long-term substitutes or emergency certifications. Young people who might otherwise consider teaching are choosing different careers because the compensation does not justify the level of education, responsibility, and workload required.

LD 34 takes a modest step toward addressing that problem by gradually increasing the minimum teacher salary from \$40,000 to \$45,000 in 2026-2027, then to \$47,500 in 2027-2028, and finally to \$50,000 in 2028-2029

That increase will not solve all of Maine's workforce challenges in education, but it moves the conversation in the right direction. If we expect qualified professionals to enter and remain in the classroom, the starting salary must at least be competitive with other professions requiring similar education levels.

At the same time, I want to be clear that increasing minimum salaries cannot be the only policy response. Maine must also begin having serious conversations about:

- how education dollars are being spent
- how administrative costs are growing
- how we measure educational outcomes and student achievement

Taxpayers deserve to know that increased investment in salaries is paired with responsible oversight and a renewed focus on student success.

In short, if we want strong schools, we must attract and retain strong teachers. Right now Maine is struggling to do that.

For those reasons, I support LD 34 as a reasonable step forward while encouraging the Legislature to continue addressing the broader structural issues affecting education in this state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Colleen Brown